

Congress passes economic stimulus bill to revive faltering economy, create jobs, and provide for long-term economic growth for America

(Washington, DC) -

Today, Congresswoman Debbie Halvorson voted in support of critical legislation that will put Americans back to work. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which passed in the House of Representatives this evening, will rebuild America's infrastructure, make us more energy independent, and create millions of new jobs. It will also lay the groundwork for long-term economic growth through crucial investments in technology and infrastructure. This legislation is the first step toward getting America's economy back on track.

Over the past several months it's become painfully clear that our economy is bleeding jobs. 2.6 million Americans lost their jobs last year, and Illinois has been hit hard. In December, the unemployment rate in Illinois rose above 7.5%, and in some parts of the 11th Congressional District unemployment has reached double digits. Just this past week, Caterpillar, a major manufacturer in Illinois, announced that it will lay off nearly 20,000 employees.

"It's pretty clear to me that we needed to act immediately and on a scale that will create new jobs and grow our economy. This package will do exactly that," Halvorson said.

"This is a bill about the future of the American economy. We're creating jobs immediately and securing long-term economic growth."

The \$819 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act includes investments in:

- Green-collar jobs - \$500 million to train workers for new green jobs
- Renewable Energy - More than \$20 billion nationally in tax cuts for clean, renewable energy, including a new enhanced tax credit for research and development focusing on smart energy conservation, energy efficiency, and renewable energy, and a multi-year extension of the

production tax credit for wind, hydro, geothermal, and bioenergy

- Tax Relief - Immediate tax relief for 95% of Americans, \$275 billion total

- Health Care and Assistance for the Unemployed - \$43 billion in increased unemployment benefits and \$39 billion for COBRA health insurance for recently laid off workers - providing 65% of the monthly COBRA contribution for up to 12 months

- Infrastructure Investments - \$1,808,810,217 total for Illinois
(Source: Transportation and Infrastructure Committee)
 - o Highways and Bridges - \$1,001,675,645
 - o Transit Capital - \$352,823,530
 - o Rail - \$191,779,080
 - o Clean Water State Revolving Fund - \$262,531,962
 - o Waterways - \$4,475,000,000 nationally, allocation to be determined by the Army Corps of Engineers to be spent on locks, dams, levies, and dredging

- Education - \$3,890,876,000 total for Illinois schools for construction and state assistance
(Source: Congressional Research Service)

- Rural Broadband - \$6 billion nationally to expand access in rural communities, allowing rural business to compete around the globe
- Health Information Technology - \$20 billion investment to modernize America's health care system, reduce medical errors, and lower health care costs long-term
- College Education - \$500 increase in the maximum Pell Grant Award that will help families cope with soaring college tuition costs, and \$490 million to the college Work-Study program to allow an additional 200,000 to participate

Independent economists have confirmed that the recovery plan will meet its goal of creating or saving 3 to 4 million jobs. Mark Zandi, chief economist for Moody's Economy.com and a former advisor to Senator John McCain's presidential campaign, found that the recovery plan would lead to an unemployment rate 2.2 percent lower than if we did nothing, and that more than 90 percent of jobs created would be in the private sector. He also estimated Illinois stands to save

or create 203,600 jobs through this bill. (Zandi Analysis, 1/21/09)

"Now more than ever we need to take bold action to revive our economy," said Halvorson. "I believe that this bill will move us in the right direction."

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act is now being considered by the Senate. Congressional leadership hopes to have the bill on the President's desk by mid-February.